

Dealing with the Violent Past: Transnational Dimensions and Diasporic Experiences

23-24 September 2021

(in alphabetic order)

a) **Inherited Conflicts in Diasporic Spaces: The Second Generation betwixt the Political Legacies of the Homeland and the Everyday Realities in the Hostland**

Bahar Baser, School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University

This paper focuses on the descendants of conflict-generated Kurdish migrants from Turkey and Iraq and looks at the transmission of collective memories of a violent past onto the next generations. It zeroes in the everyday experiences of Kurdish second-generation in various European countries with regards to their sense of belonging, interaction with other groups who are considered as adversaries and new mobilisation patterns they adapt in order to come to terms with this past. The findings are based on the author's extensive fieldwork in Germany, Sweden, France and the Netherlands between 2008 and 2020. Secondary resources such as diaspora organizations' websites, diaspora members' interviews published in online media outlets, politicians' speeches and newspaper articles will also be used in order to supplement the data gathered from face-to-face interviews.

b) **Long-distance post-nationalism of the Palestinian diaspora**

Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek, SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Warsaw

This presentation will reflect on how Polish and British Palestinians born and brought up in geographical separation from Palestine seek to create a meaningful relationship with the homeland of their parents and grandparents. Drawing on the interviews with Palestinians in Poland and the UK it will argue that second-generations' relationship with Palestine cannot be seen exclusively as a direct influence of intergenerational transmission of identity within the family. The paper will explore how Palestine 'becomes' important for this generation and how it strives to do it in an autonomous way. I will argue that it is often the re-occurring waves of violence inflicted on Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian Territories that activate their engagement with the ancestral homeland. Drawing on the empirical data, I will advance the concept of *long-distance post-nationalism* which emerges among the second-generation Palestinians as a response to the ongoing violence in Palestine. The paper will conclude that this *long-distance post-nationalism*, which is driven less by root-based attachment to place, and more by a strife for human rights and

justice may be a suitable lens to explore continuous relationships of diasporas with their ancestral homelands

c) **The concentration camp number: Inter-generational memory, memorialisation and resignification**

Alice Bloch, Department of Sociology, University of Manchester, UK

This paper explores the inter-generational impact of the Holocaust on the descendants of survivors. Using the lens of the number tattooed on the bodies of prisoners in the Auschwitz complex, and exploring the decision of some survivor descendants to replicate the number on their own body, the paper focuses on the ways in which the descendants of survivors embrace, embody and memorialize their family histories. The number has become a symbol of the crimes of the Holocaust though its meaning has changed during different periods of Holocaust remembrance. This paper draws on on-going research with the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme Trust Small Research grant in partnership with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, to explore the decision of the descendants of survivors to replicate the concentration camp number by having it tattooed on their own body.

d) **Second generation from refugee backgrounds: affects and transnational ties to ancestral homeland**

Milena Chimienti, University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Western Switzerland

This paper explores how feelings and identity affect the transnational ties of second generation from refugee backgrounds. We assume that the transnational ties of children of refugees might be different from those of other second-generation because of the violence and/or trauma that their parents may have suffered and the limited rights that some will have been subjected to as asylum-seekers when they arrived in the receiving country. The adult children of refugees show a varied range of feelings and positional identities that influence their relations with the country of origin of their parents.

e) **Making sanctuary: Armenian diasporic memory of loss in the ancestral homeland**

Tsypylma Darieva, Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS), Berlin

The Armenian trauma memorialization took place not only in the context of a post-Soviet 'return of the repressed', but also in broader frameworks of global morality and diasporic mobilization. Second and later generation diasporic Armenians living in western countries (USA, Canada, Europe) were one of the main mobilizing forces in the production of knowledge and commemoration of the Armenian genocide and expulsion of Armenians from the territory of the Ottoman Empire. In this paper I use the case of Armenian-Americans to highlight 'informal' acts and artifacts of memorialization of violent loss outside of the (grand)parents' country of origin, which bring a new dynamic into transnational diasporic homeland engagement. Members of second and later generation Armenian-Americans are engaged in creating and maintaining a variety of symbolic repositories of remembering the loss by using and investing in the Republic of

Armenia's nature, landscape and global ecological discourses. Notions of soil, tree planting and reforestation projects play a significant role in an intergenerational transmission of memory of loss as they serve as new spaces of diasporic engagement, as a sanctuary for homeland tourism and as tools of individual's political socialization.

f) **Intergenerational transmission of conflict memories: second-generation diasporans and conflict transportation**

Elise Feron, Tampere Peace Research Institute, University of Tampere

How do generational factors within diaspora settings affect discourses on, and memories of, conflicts occurring in home countries? How are experiences of violence in the country of origin discussed within diaspora groups? And how are younger generations relating to this violent past? Based on an exploration of intergenerational cleavages among the Rwandan and Burundian diasporas in Belgium, this paper investigates how memories relating to violence in the home country are passed on, or not, to younger members of diaspora groups. The paper notably explores how experiences of racism and of discrimination in host societies push many second and third generation diasporans to reflect upon their identity, driving them to explore their parents' pasts, and the reasons why they left their home countries. The "where do I come from?" question can lead to a reproduction of conflict transportation patterns across generations, however transformed by experiences of racism, and by a reflection on past and present colonial practices.

g) **The Albanian speaking Diaspora's shapes Home country Political Destiny**

Bashkim Iseni, University of Fribourg, Switzerland

Since the end of the Wars in the former Yugoslavia, especially in Kosovo and Northern Macedonia, the huge Albanian speaking Diasporas in the Western countries, especially those established in Switzerland, continue to be very active regarding the political developments in the countries of origin. This transnational phenomenon concerns particularly the second generation of young Swiss-Albanians who were energetically engaged toward regime in Kosovo, in 2019 and 2021. As oppressed ethnic minority in their countries of origin, the Albanian speaking Diasporas from Kosovo and North Macedonia, but also Serbia, have historically been engaged, in different ways, in the resolution of their ethno-national issues in the region. The amazing fact is that these former diaspora activists came to power during and after the wars for the national liberation, and last years, the new generation of Albanian speaking Diasporas try to overthrow them in order to reinforce democracy and transparency. This article seeks to shed historical light on the engagement of these diasporic populations in the countries of origin, but also to analyse the strategies and how transnational networks that have been put in place to contribute about the major political changes in the country of origin.

h) **Diaspora and Homeland Narratives Meeting through Art: Lessons from ŠTO TE NEMA**

Dženeta Karabegović, Department of Sociology, University of Salzburg

Migrant and diaspora communities shape their own memory narratives and commemorative practices which may occur in conjunction with, parallel, or in opposition to dominant narratives 'at home.' Diaspora add to memory narratives employing methods and partners from host countries in order to influence memorialization projects in the homeland with varying results. Through these transnational practices, diaspora may express their memory and transitional justice claims, while reaffirming their identity. This paper examines the narratives and actors in a distinct collaborative artist and diaspora commemoration project based on a nomadic monument to commemorate the Srebrenica Genocide, ŠTO TE NEMA. Based on participatory research leading up to the last iteration of the public nomadic monument at the Srebrenica Memorial Center in Bosnia and Herzegovina after fifteen years in different communities, this paper examines how this project on the one hand reflects the migration experiences of diaspora members while at the same time building memory and identity narratives that connect the diaspora and the homeland communities. The paper analyzes how these narratives respond to, reframe, and in turn reflect in the post-conflict and transitional society in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as its diaspora communities, in an effort to self-heal, shape identities, and address dominant ethnonational political narratives, with a particular look at the intersection of religion, remembrance, and identity.

i) **Reframing Integration from the Perspective of those who Experienced Migration: An Ethnography with former Labor Migrants and Refugees from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY)**

Sandra King-Savic, Center for Governance and Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen,

How do Yugoslav labor migrants and refugees define and negotiate integration? Although labor migrants and refugees arrived in Switzerland from the same sending region, these are very distinct groups: labor migrants came 'voluntarily', though coerced one might argue, mainly between the 1960s and 70s, whereas refugees were expelled from their homes during the 1990s. The project1 examines how labor migrants and refugees from the same sending state position themselves within narratives of integration in Switzerland. Crucially, I investigate integration from the perspective of the circumstances under which migrants come to Switzerland. By emphasizing the rationale of migration as a point of departure, I demonstrate that contextual categories that led to migration affect and influence perceived inclusion in the receiving state, as opposed to ethnic and/or confessional affiliation, respectively. More than that, the project lays bare the discursive construction of supposedly neat migratory categories, as introduced above. Based on Nancy Foner, Willem Schinkel, and Leila Hadj Abdou, my research builds on, and expands scholarship on the de-racialization and de-ethnicization of migrants and knowledge production in migration studies. Migrants from the former Yugoslavia are an ideal group to investigate strategies of integration. Examining migrants from the former Yugoslavia allows for controlling for place of origin in the subsequent analysis of perceived integration in the receiving state. I have collected a

qualitative (and quantitative), as well as source-based data set to analyze how migrants experience, mediate, and perhaps instrumentalize heritage in their understanding of integration in Switzerland. Ethnographic methods include participant observation as well as in-depth and semi-structured, open-ended interviews. The quantitative data set is comprised of questionnaires. The goal of the project is twofold. First, my research contributes to the understanding about integration from the perspective of migrants. Second, by using a grounded theory approach to provide a hitherto neglected perspective on migration, namely the perception of migrants themselves, the proposed contributes to broaden current policy debates in Switzerland regarding challenges the confederation faces with the current, and coming issues connected to migration.

j) **Ghostly ruins: contemplating the absent presence of conflict memories among Lebanese diasporic lifeworlds in Montreal**

Bruno Lefort, Tampere Peace Research Institute, University of Tampere, Finland

With the notable exception of remarkable artistic productions, the memories of past conflicts and in particular of the 1975-1990 wars remain largely obliterated in the Lebanese diasporic populations in Canada. They nonetheless surface as an imperceptible foundation both in the public performance of the Lebanese identities in the city and in family life stories. This ambivalent interplay between absence and presence suggests the role of remembrance and forgetting among diasporic populations in the construction of their local attachment to their place of settlement. In particular, stories as well as silences about the past conflicts become ways of negotiating one's presence and belonging in the host society. Building on ethnographic fieldwork conducted among the Lebanese diasporas in Montreal between 2016 and 2020, this contribution proposes to approach the question of war memories from a renewed perspective. Instead of examining their role in the perpetuation or transformation of intergroup boundaries, it shifts the focus towards the existential process of placemaking to resituate the politics of traumatic memories among Lebanese diasporas in the everyday negotiation of their presence in Montreal. In doing so, it highlights how difference and coexistence are constituted locally as lived realities.

k) **Dealing with violent past and its remanence in the present. War memory and transmission over generations of Chechens living in the European Union**

Aude Merlin, Department of Political Science, Université libre de Bruxelles

Anne Le Huérou, Institut des Sciences Sociales du Politique, Université Paris Nanterre

Dozens of thousands of Chechens have fled Chechnya after the resumption of the war in Chechnya in 1999. Even if open armed conflict is over for several years, violence and repression in the Chechen Republic are still leading people to flee the region and Russia to Europe. Considering these Chechens on the territory of EU member states, as a "diaspora in the making" - according to the commonly accepted criteria for defining a diaspora, including the circumstances of exile -, we propose to explore how memory of the past as well as its transmission to the next generation have impacted the life in exile in terms of narrative, self-perceptions and communication practices. Numerous academic works as well as Human Rights organizations reports have already shown how

the very violent and recent past of the two wars which has been succeeded by the violence of the regime have deeply impacted the Chechen society, which is torn apart alongside many cleavages (Raubisko 2009, Le Huérou et al. 2014) and mostly deprived of any kind of collective memory (Merlin 2014, Merlin 2021) whereas when Chechen diaspora comes in the spotlight in EU countries, it's mostly through facts of violence (Le Huérou, Merlin, 2020). Our research aims at showing how in the diaspora context memory of the past and its transmission design somehow a generational cleavage. We would like, in the case of Chechens living in exile in Europe, to analyze "how intergenerational tensions and ruptures affect the reception of the past by the second generation". This research is based on more than twenty semi open interviews of Chechens living in Belgium and in France. The interviews were collected from 2015 till 2019. Some collective interviews including representatives of both generations led us to identify this cleavage and the narratives both generations develop about memory of war.

l) **Legacies of conflict and politics of diaspora mobilization: ex-Yugoslav communities in Switzerland**

Dilyara Müller-Suleymanova, Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland

The war in Bosnia lies almost 30 years back, but its legacies continue to deeply impact not only the Bosnian state and society but also the transnational diaspora. This paper will explore the politics of diaspora formation and mobilization in the context of community affected by the legacies of violent conflict. Focusing on the Bosnian diaspora community in Switzerland and specifically on the national day of statehood of Bosnia-Herzegovina, organized by this community, this paper will analyze the attempts to construct and mobilize a diaspora in a situation of a deeply contested and divided nationhood. It will demonstrate how belonging to Bosnia is constructed in the context of a diaspora that is divided not only along ethnic lines but also along other dimensions such as religiousness, urban-rural and other divides. It will look at the responses such attempts elicit among diaspora members, especially among the second-generation youth who were born/grew up in Switzerland. The paper will highlight the role of memories and the politics of affect in the construction of diaspora belonging.

m) **Transcending Fault-lines of Conflict: Intergenerational Narratives of Afghan Diaspora in Switzerland and Germany**

Heela Najibullah, Department of Religious Studies, University of Zurich

The proposed research analyses the nature of key catalysts that have uprooted Afghans. It will draw on a qualitative analysis of personal histories and biographies of the Afghan families in Switzerland and Germany using grounded theory methodology to answer the following three main research questions: 1. What are most important accounts to have caused the fault-lines (socio-ethnic, political, religious) of conflict that forced the Afghan diaspora seek refuge in Switzerland and Germany? 2. How do the fault-lines transcend generations and impact their relationships with their own country and the community in the host country? 3. How have the Afghan diaspora coped with these fault-lines and what aspects of religion has played a role with their coping mechanism? The Afghan conflict is protracted and has led to massive displacements not only within Afghanistan but led and still leads to displacement abroad. The current research on the Afghan conflict is

focused on the political discourse rather than people's experiences in the conflict. It lacks i) people-centric accounts of the conflict, ii) how the conflict narratives have been inherited or passed to the next generations, and iii) What role has religion played in coping mechanisms of diaspora? It is important to note that the Afghan conflict can be divided into phases such as the Cold War (1947-1991), where Jihad was used as a political tool, the civil war (1992-1996), the Taliban rule (1996-2001) and the War on Terror (2001 until today). The common thread throughout conflict remains to be Jihad. If the politicization of Jihad as concept has been the driving force of conflict, what role religion has had in the lives of the Afghan diaspora. The research is innovative because it sheds light on intergenerational impacts of conflict in Afghanistan. It will have far-reaching results connecting the field of religious studies and diaspora studies with a focus on two generations of Afghans. How the diaspora coped with conflict across two generations will shed light on traumas inherited, and relationships impacted. Furthermore, their narratives will indicate how they are situated concerning their country of origin and host country and insights about the economic, social, and cultural ties of the target group can further knowledge dissemination beyond the academic sphere.

n) **White Armband Day: Commemorating the genocide in Prijedor in translocal diasporic communities**

Johanna Paul, Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology, Bielefeld University

The interlinkage between migration and memory is nowhere as apparent as in the concept of diaspora. Still, there is surprisingly little scholarly enquiry into the impact of conflict-related memories and remembrance of traumatic events on processes of diasporic community formation, despite a growing interest in diaspora mobilisation for post-conflict processes in the country of origin. The widely dispersed Bosnian diaspora is shaped particularly around the recent past, and translocal identities and networks based on a shared origin in the same local community have been highlighted as important features contributing to its formation. In this presentation, I look at the commemoration of White Armband Day, an alternative commemoration of the 1992 genocide in Prijedor that emerged from a local memory protest in 2012 and is being established as a commemoration day marked locally, abroad and virtually on 31 May. I focus on the public commemorations abroad and what specific functions they serve regarding internal community cohesion and the community's positioning vis-à-vis the country of settlement and country of origin. Considering that often, but not always, the mobilisation for these commemorations is most visible in places of settlement with larger populations of Prijedorčani, I aim to understand what role their translocal networks play in the establishment of this new commemoration day. In line with diaspora scholars arguing that certain events in the 'homeland' can trigger the formation of diasporic communities, I thereby ask how the emergence of White Armband Day triggered the commemoration of genocide in Prijedor abroad and fosters the constitution of translocal diasporic communities. The presentation is based on a mapping of public commemorations and related practices in several main countries of settlement (Croatia, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the USA, Canada), analysed against the background of opportunities in the respective institutional and political settings and organisational structures within the Bosnian communities.